

By the time Francis Poulenc wrote his *Trois pièces* in 1928, impressionism in French music was considered passé. According to musicologist Alfred Frankenstein, what emerged as a counterfoil to impressionism was “clear, sharply defined planes, often clashing polytonally but all the more specific for their clash; everything is crisp, pointed, ‘motoric’ in rhythm and in texture. . . . The [Poulenc] *Toccata* is clearly in that [class].” Poulenc was counted as one of *Les Six* (a group of six antiromantic French nationalist composers). Unlike his colleagues, who were looking ahead, Poulenc was a classicist, with Mozart and Scarlatti as his models. Disposed as well toward impressionism, Poulenc often took a more lyrical approach. The *Nocturne No. 4 in C Minor* exemplifies this side of his musical personality.

Alborada del gracioso (*Morningsong of the Jester*) is the most performed work of the five pieces comprising the suite *Miroirs*, one of Ravel’s major works for solo piano. The Spanish flavor and rhythm inherent in the work stem from his sympathetic link to the Iberian Peninsula, the birthplace of his mother.

Liszt’s *Sonata in B Minor*, published in 1854, was dedicated to Robert Schumann in return for the 1838 dedication to Liszt of Schumann’s well-known *C Major Fantasy*. The Liszt work contained so many daring innovations that many who attended the first performance could not endure it to the end. Its technical hurdles are Herculean and sometimes criticized as self-defeating. In addition, Liszt’s musical ideas were touted as being sophisticated to the point of vagueness. At one time belittled as improvisatory and episodic, the *B Minor Sonata*, with its intricately laced inner workings, is now viewed as a monumental work of prophetic cleverness and intellect. Liszt’s cyclical use of material and his way of modulating through lengthy passages that border on the self-indulgent have come to be accepted for their originality. His coda to the sonata is visionary, with its bells tolling in the distance, bringing the work to a mystical close that reflects his lifelong vacillation between flamboyant self-indulgence and spiritual fervor. While the extent to which the work relates to Liszt’s personality is debatable, there is no denying that it brought the romantic sonata to a point where it existed on its own as a genre, without need of further definition or justification.

Program notes by Elmer Booze

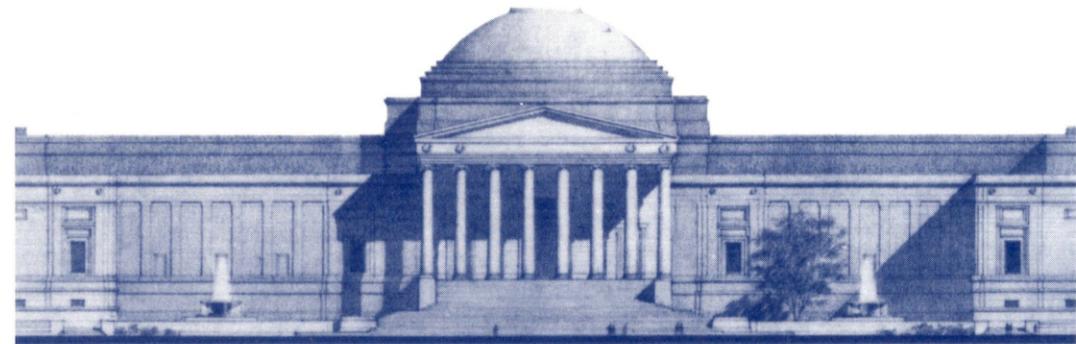
The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 p.m.

The Fifty-eighth Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
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2334th Concert

MARK MARKHAM, *pianist*

Sunday Evening, 30 January 2000
Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

